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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the indicatcrs of extraordinary ability in young people; selects for more careful scrutiny some characteristics of the talented and gifted that would influence the content, sequence, and methods of sex education; and suggests the broad outlines of a differential curriculum of sex education. Data documenting advanced physical, intellectual, emotional, social and creative development provide parallel inferences about the sexuality of a gifted population. Guidelines for differentiating sexuality curriculums include the following: (1) exposure to experiences, materials, and information which are outside the bounds of the regular curriculum; (2) opportunities to elaborate on the regular curriculum through additional working time, materials and experiences; and (3) self-initiated study, projects and activities. (Author)

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SEX EDUCATION FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED YOUTH

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Sex educators have overlooked a special group: the talented and gifted. Since information about this invisible minority is not widely disseminated, this paper will summarize the indicators of extraordinary ability in young people; select for more careful scrutiny some characteristics of the talented and gifted that would influence the content, sequence, and methods of sex education; and suggest the broad outlines of a differential curriculum of sex education for this special population.

Perspectives on the Talented and Gifted

Gifts, talents, creativity, superior intellect are terms that are used with caution in a democratic society. Moreover, they are qualities and concepts that are difficult to define and measure. There is agreement that within both genders and in all ages, races, creeds, and economic circumstances some individuals stand outside and above the ordinary range of development and accomplishment. These individuals are superior in most measurable human behaviors. Probably between two and five percent of a population are extraordinary in a positive sense.(1) It is estimated that there are between one and two million gifted young people below college age. Are they sought out, nutured, and valued by their families and communities? Not necessarily.

As the values of society change, views towards exceptionality change. In the 1950's and 1960's, excellence was evaluated and measured by IQ tests and academic achievement.(2) Children whose verbal scores and subject matter grades were high, were cited as gifted. The analytic, inductive, logical, rational and highly verbal child was acclaimed as the gifted child. (3) Social and political events of the 1960's and early 1970's stimulated keen interest in "artistic excellence, moral behavior, and that unpredictable,

but highly prized, dimension of creativity."(4) Values shifted towards identifying and developing divergent, deductive, diffuse, Gestalten, spatial, concrete, intuitive, and emotional skills.(5) A population with these attributes promptly surfaced and demanded appropriate education.

During this same historic period, new knowledge and views of sexuality, and new sex education programs have been debated in every community and school. Sex education curriculums are being implemented, cautiously. Special programs for the gifted also move slowly. Each area can support and learn from the other. Sex educators need to understand the gifted while special education can enrich the curriculum with sex education.

Programs and services for special people depend on societal needs and priorities, psychological fads, and, decisively, upon legal rights. The law in some states mandates appropriate education for people with special needs and abilities, including the gifted and talented. Sex education curriculums for these people need to be developed within the context of the rights of a special group to appropriate and differentiated education.

Indicators of Extraordinary Ability: Early Warning for Parents; Clues for Parent Education (6)

Parents and educators at different times may be expected to notice unusual qualities in children. The following list of questions was prepared to alert parents to the possibility that a child possesses far above average potential.(7) The consistent use of the male pronoun is in the original source.

1. Is your child physically precocious? Did he begin to walk and talk early?

2. Did your child mature early with regard to sexual development?

3. Does he possess intellectual curiousity? Does he possess a large and picturesque vocabulary which is used with originality and rich imagery? Does he wonder, by asking, "I wonder how, why, when, where?"

4. Is your child highly competitive in group situations?

5. Does your child enjoy, and is he challenged by, independent study?

6. Does your child use problem-solving techniques in reaching conclusions?

7. Is he original and ingenuous?

8. Is your child exceptionally good at physical activities like climbing, bike-riding, sliding, rough-housing, long before you deem it safe?

9. Does your child show advanced fine-motor control skills?

10. Did your child learn such skills as left-to-right progression, auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, likenesses and differences, word opposites?

11. Does he see many solutions to problems?

12. Does your child learn by himself, such that you comment, "He learned it by himself"?

13. Does your child use vocabularly beyond his age level?

14. Does your child memorize quickly?

15. Does your child perceive abstract ideas rapidly?

16. Does your child have a great curiosity about the nature of man, his environment, and his universe?

17. Does your child organize tasks and follow through those tasks to completion?

18. When drawing, does your child add much detail to his picture?

19. Does he enjoy reading the novel, the different, the bizarre?

The first two items are particulary significant for sex education. Generally, outstanding young people are physically advanced, and mature early sexually.

Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Children for Professionals

Taylor has edited material for educational seminars in which he uses Hartman and Renzulli's format for describing the major characteristics of gifted and talented children. (8) Gallagher has used as his frame of reference the same attributes: learning, motivation, creativity, and leadership. (9) Within these same general categories, each of the writers specifies the magnitude of the characteristics and behaviors which place the exceptional child well ahead of the norm. A number of summary lists follow. They are intended to acquaint sex educators with current thinking about the gifted. Substantial literature is available to those working with gifted young people.

Learning Characteristics

1. Possesses an unusually large vocabulary for his age group and grade level, uses terms in a meaningful way, and has verbal behavior characterized by richness of expression, elaboration, and fluency.
2. Has a large storehouse of information about a variety of different topics which is much beyond usual interests of age group.
3. Can quickly master and recall factual information and is facile in discussing details.
4. Has keen insight into cause/effect relationships. With this awareness, the child tries to discover how and why things are as they are, asks provocative questions, and wants to know what makes things and people work.
5. Has a ready grasp of underlying principles and can quickly make valid generalizations about people, events or things, and looks for

similarities and differences.

6. Is an alert observer, usually seeing much more in a story, film, or incident.
7. Does a great deal of independent reading, usually preferring more advanced and sophisticated level books. The child tends to read more non-fiction than fiction.
8. Does independent reasoning; breaks tasks into likes and differences, parts and wholes; and problem solves in a logical and sequential manner.

Motivational Characteristics

1. Quickly becomes bored with routine tasks as soon as the challenge has been mastered.
2. Strives toward perfection with speed and productivity, and is constantly self-critical and self-demanding.
3. Becomes absorbed in tasks, topics, and problems, and is persistent in task completion. Sometimes the child becomes so involved with a project that it is difficult to help him move on to another task.
4. Needs very little external motivation when an activity is exciting and rewarding.
5. Prefers to work independently, requiring very little direction from others. Initiates self-directed goal pursuits.
6. Is quite concerned with right and wrong, good and bad; often evaluates and passes judgement on self, events, people and things.
7. Is more interested than a normal population of children in many adult problems, i.e., religion, politics, sex, and race.
8. Is often self-assertive and stubborn in beliefs. At times, the gifted child becomes quite aggressive in vocalizing opinions.

9. The high verbal child is well organized, providing structure to things, people, and events.

Creativity Characteristics

1. Displays a great deal of curiosity about many different things. The child constantly asks questions about anything and everything, often to the distraction of others.
2. Generates a great many ideas or solutions to problems and questions, and manages to find clever, unique and often way-out responses.
3. Is uninhibited in expression of opinion and tenaciously holds a thought. Child is often radical and spirited in disagreement.
4. Is speculative and adventurous and willing to take risks.
5. Presents a good deal of intellectual playfulness, freely fantasizes and has a great deal of imagination.
6. Has a keen sense of humor and senses humor in situations that may not appear humorous to others. The talented child has an ability to tie together seemingly unrelated concepts.
7. Is unusually aware of own impulses. Boys are much freer in expression of interest for girls. Girls display a greater than usual amount of independence. The child is emotionally quite sensitive.
8. Is sensitive to beauty and attends to aesthetic characteristics of things.
9. Is nonconforming, accepting of disorder, highly individualistic and unafraid of being different.
10. Constructively critizes mandates and is unwilling to accept without examination.

Leadership Characteristics

1. Assumes responsibility, can be counted upon to do what has been promised and usually does things well.
2. Is self-confident in interpersonal relationships with peers and adults. The child is comfortable when demonstrating productivity to others.
3. Seems to be generally well liked by classmates.
4. Is cooperative with classmates and teachers and easy to get along with. Avoids bickering but holds to beliefs.
5. Has good verbal expression and communicates well.
6. Is flexible in thought and actions and can readily adapt to change.
7. Enjoys social interaction and prefers company of others.
8. Assumes a dominating role and directs activities.
9. Participates in most social activites in school and home.
10. Has good gross and fine motor coordination; enjoys sports and excels in athletic activities.

Psychosocial Characteristics

Most of the psychosocial attributes of gifted and talented children have been included under the characteristics of learning, motivation, creativity and leadership. To this list of attributes we have added the following positive descriptions.(10,11) They are a mixed bag. Some repeat traits already cited. Others, e.g., sensation seeking, may alert the sex educator to the complex structure of the gifted personality.

desire to know	truthfulness
will power	perseverence
originality	popularity

personal adjustment	forceful
competitive	social adjustment
high energy level	spontaneity
eagerness	preference for complexity
attraction to mysterious	idealism
reflectiveness	sensation seeking

School Accomplishments

Getzels and Gillon have reported certain high level accomplishments which, for the most part, talented and gifted seem to attain.(12) They are successful in winning prizes for music and art exhibits and for other competitive skill rewarded activities. The gifted child is consistently elected to positions of leadership in school government and special functions. In addition, the child usually receives outstanding grades in academic subjects, as well as in art, music, and community service.

Some Learning Characteristics of Gifted Children With Concomitant Problems (13)

It must be emphasized that gifted children grow in very different ways and show widely varying interests and behaviors. Differential development within the child, the inability to relate to and communicate with peers, teachers, and family may result in personality and behavioral problems. The following list relates possible problems to learning characteristics of gifted children.

Characteristics	Concomitant Problems
1. Keen power of observation; naive receptivity; sense of the significant; willingness to examine the unusual	1. Possible gullibility

2. Power of abstraction, conceptualization, synthesis; interest in inductive learning and problem solving; pleasure in intellectual activity	2. Occasional resistance to direction; rejection or remission of detail.
3. Interest in cause-effect relations, ability to see relationships; interest in applying concepts; love of truth	3. Difficulty in accepting the illogical.
4. Liking for structure and order; liking for consistency, as in value systems	4. Invention of own systems, sometimes conflicting.
5. Retentiveness	5. Dislike for routine and drill; need for early mastery of foundation skills.
6. Verbal proficiency; large vocabulary; facility in expression; interest in reading; breadth of information in advanced areas	6. Need for specialized reading vocabulary early; parent resistance to reading; escape into verbalism
7. Questioning attitude, intellectual curiosity, inquisitive mind; intrinsic motivation	7. Lack of early home or school stimulation
8. Power of critical thinking; skepticism, evaluative testing; self-criticism and self-checking	8. Critical attitude toward others; discouragement from self-criticism
9. Creativeness and inventiveness; liking for new ways of doing things; interest in creating, brainstorming, freewheeling	9. Rejection of the known; need to invent for oneself
10. Power of concentration; intense attention that excludes all else; long attention span	10. Resistance to interruption; isolation
11. Persistent, goal-directed behavior	11. Stubborness
12. Sensitivity, intuitiveness, empathy for others; need for emotional support and a sympathetic attitude	12. Need for success and recognition; sensitivity to criicism; vulnerability to peer rejection
13. High energy, alertness, eagerness; periods of intense voluntary effort preceding invention	13. Frustration with inactivity and absence of progress
14. Independence in work and study; preference for individualized work; self-reliance; need for freedom of movement and action	14. Parent and peer group pressures and non-conformity; problems of rejection and rebellion

15. Versatility and virtuosity; diversity of interests and abilities; many hobbies; proficiency in art forms such as music and drawing	15. Lack of homogeneity in group work; need for flexibility and individualization; need for help in exploring and developing interests; need to build basic competencies in major interests
16. Friendliness and outgoingness	17. Need for peer group relations in many types of groups; problems in developing social leadership

This section of the report concludes with a cautionary note. Gifted young people are among our most neglected students. Exceptional potential is overlooked, unrecognized, deliberately ignored, discouraged, disparaged and dismissed. Girls, minority groups, and poor children are most often the victims of wasted human resources. (14), (15)

Selected Characteristics of Talented and Gifted Young People That Would Influence the Content, Sequence, and Methods of Sex Education

The consistency of the evidence pointing to advanced physical, intellectual emotional, social, and creative development of a gifted population tempts the sex educator to make parallel inferences about the sexuality of these young people. Indeed, there may be no alternative. Since substantial research is lacking, the initial efforts to develop sex education curriculums must be guided by informal observations of sexuality, and by reports of those working with the gifted. Sex education curriculums already in use could provide the basis for expanded content. Suggestions for sex education should be viewed as tentative proposals, even hypotheses, that need to be field tested in classrooms and informal groups.

Physical Development

Gifted and talented people are "the other" in the same way that old people, women, the handicapped, and Blacks have been perceived as physically different,

as strange and threatening. Mythologies are constructed to deal with ambivalence towards those who are different and to neutralize their "magic" and their "power." The physical attributes of the gifted are disparaged to counteract envy and admiration. Contrary to myth, as a group, the gifted have physically advanced growth patterns. They have a generally attractive aspect, and their early sexual maturity is consistent with general accelerated development.

There is some basis for widespread feeling that some gifted appear to be smaller than those with whom they consort. The explanation is simple. Gifted young people are often in advanced classes with students several years older. Also, gifted young people have friends several years older. Compared to the older and larger people in whose company they are seen, they look small. Moreover these young people may perceive themselves as small, underdeveloped, physically and sexually retarded compared to their friends. Mentally and emotionally, they think and feel older than they look. Gifted boys, especially before puberty, are truly subject to unfair comparisons both in relation to gifted girls and to older friends.

Implications for sex education about puberty for boys and girls are clear. Puberty information by fourth grade should be added to a foundation of basic sex education which was started in the earliest grades.

Psycho-Social-Sexual Development

Education about sexual physiology is part of education for sexuality. Gender identity, gender role, the personal uses of sexuality, sexuality in relationships, and the place of sexuality in society and culture are universal concerns. The biological "facts of life" can be presented and understood

early. Gender identity, to the extent that is is a cognitive function, should be learned relatively well by intelligent youth. Gender role is now being learned by many children as non-stereotyped behavior. Gifted boys and girls can understand the origins of sex linked roles and the benefits of disregarding gender based limitations.

There are no data about the sensual and auto-erotic behaviors of the gifted. Descriptions of them as inventive, creative, sensitive, non-conforming, inquisitive, interested in the unusual would suggest early attention to physical mysteries and an early inventory of the body's resources. The sex educator might expect the practice of early masturbation, in the absence of adult interference. Preference for older playmates also suggests early initiation into sex play.

A dilemma for post-pubertal gifted boys, and somewhat less for girls, derives from the incongruencies between, on the one hand, early maturation, intellectual sophistication and a social network of older friends while chronological age differences preclude serious social-sexual relationships. Idealism, friendliness, sensitivity and the need for emotional support render some gifted young people gullible and vulnerable to rejection or sexual exploitation.

Gifted young people pass through stages as loners. Selective participation reinforces the common misconception that they are maladjusted, egocentric, social misfits or snobs. Their adaptive response to unmanageable social and sexual pressure is miscontrued by the majority.

"They are completely different from their own age group," says one educator. They are also out of step with dating and sexual patterns of older friends.

Sex education could meet the social and affectional needs of gifted, talented and creative young people during puberty and adolescence by fostering self-directed peer group support and discussions. The gifted need to meet with their own kind for understanding and sharing, just as other minorities withdraw at times to share similar interests and problems. These groups could allow brainstorming of an unusual range of sex related interests in a psychologically safe environment. Values and values clarification would, of course, be woven into the group process. Consistent with the manner in which the gifted pursue other interests, consideration of sexuality would be thorough and unpredictable.

"The earlier capacity of the gifted for self-direction has been noted many times by teachers. Because the gifted are so mature psychologically, it is reasonable to accept the desire of even very young gifted children to pursue special interests persistently and at length. As long as a child wishes to delve into a subject of interest, he should be encouraged, regardless of age." (16) Parents, teachers, and sex educators might well trust the gifted, talented, and creative to take the initiative and responsibility for much of their own sex education. So little is established about the psycho-sexual development of the gifted that we must look to them for information and guidance.

Creativity and Sexuality

Human development theory has from its earliest formulations identified the wellsprings of creativity within sexual energies. Concepts such as latency, intellectualization and sublimation are attempts to define the processes by which sexuality is managed and gradually integrated. The limited intent of

this paper precludes the development of these themes. However, they are concepts of particular concern to the sex educator of the gifted. These young people do, in fact, need long periods of education and preparation and may have a protracted adolescence that extends well into their 20's. They need time to mature. One young sex educator who was trained to use affective group skills was bitter and contemptuous of a middle school gifted group who intellectualized and would not deal with feelings. In Erikson's terminology, does not the adolescent "moratorium" include a moratorium on sexual experience?

A college student suggested a compromise when she wrote: "I never really thought of associating my sexual feelings and my creativity. I thought I was such a restless and emotional child. Now I understand that I was different in some ways from my class. I think that creative children should be taught to relate sex towards their art work and that the art work should be used to express sexual feelings. I remember the sixth grade groups in the cloak room and school yard, the fifth grade kissing games and dating. They seemed silly, but if I didn't participate I was an outsider. I wish I had known then that for me I could be sexual in my work."

DIFFERENTIATING CURRICULUM FOR THE GIFTED AND THE TALENTED.

In the near future, formal sex education curriculums for the gifted and the talented must be constructed and tested. Guidelines may be found in general principles for special curriculum development. The main problem for sex educators may be in accepting the "specialness" of the population and their learning needs.

"Curriculum for the gifted and the talented can only be marked as such if it encompasses elements which distinguish it from being suitable for the education of all children. Curriculum for gifted students must be congruent with the characteristics that identify them as a distinct population. The answer to the question of why a student is gifted or talented is also the answer to the question of what type of curriculum provisions should be developed for this. Differentiation of curricular activities for the gifted and talented relies on the elaboration of certain variables: procedures for presenting learning opportunities, nature of the input and expectacies for learning outcomes." (17)

Differentiating Learning Within the Regular Curriculum: Procedures for Presenting Learning Opportunities

Exposure - Students are exposed to experiences, materials, and information which are outside the bounds of the regular curriculum, do not match age/grade expectancies, and introduce something new or unusual

Extension - Students are afforded opportunities to elaborate on the regular curriculum through additional allocation of working time, materials and experiences, and/or further self-initiated or related study

Development - Students are provided with instruction which focuses on thorough or new explanations of a concept or a skill which is part of a general learning activity within the regular curriculum

Differentiating Learning as a Separate Curriculum: Type of Input

Accelerated or advanced content
Higher degreee of complexity of content
Introduction of content beyond the prescribed curriculum
Student-selected content according to interest
Working with the abstract concepts in a content area
Level of resources used
Type of resources available

Appropriating a Longer Time for Learning; Expectancies for Learning

Creating or generating something new (information, ideas, product)
Depth of learning
Transfer and application of learning to other and/or new areas of greater challenge
Evidence of personal growth or sophistication in attitudes, appreciations, feelings
Formulating new generalizations
Development of higher level cognitive processes
Stylizing and implementing own study design

Conclusions

This paper has attempted to extend sex education theory and curriculum development toward a group which has not been served: gifted, talented, and creative young people. The first section describes their characteristics to emphasize for the sex educator that the top 2%-5% of the population is indeed extraordinary. In the second section, the sexual characteristics of this population are inferred from sparce data. Timing and methods of sex education are suggested. A curriculum development model is presented to guide sex educators into unfamiliar territory.

Initially, sex educators might become acquainted with the gifted by observing in schools with special programs, studying reports about the gifted, and examining curriculums in use with the gifted in subjects that are related to human sexuality. Parents, teachers, and the gifted themselves need to be consultants in program planning. As sex educators, we know that human sexuality is a gift and its many uses require intelligence, feeling, creativity, and talent.

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Resources for the Talented and Gifted

The Association for the Gifted
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Va. 22091

Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted
and the Talented
Civic Center Tower Building
316 W. Second Street
Los Angeles, Calif. 90012

Office of the Gifted and Talented
United States Office of Education
400 Sixth St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

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